

Review of the Children's Television Standards

Context

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is undertaking a review of the Children's Television Standards ('the review') to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness, noting:

1. the requirement for children's television standards is set out in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the BSA) (s122 refers);
2. the objectives of the Children's Television Standards, as stated in the Explanatory Memorandum to the BSA, are to ensure children are specifically catered for in programming, including Australian programming, and to provide for the protection of children from possible harmful effects of television;
3. these fit within broader objectives of the BSA, which include:
 - Promoting the availability to audiences throughout Australia of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information;
 - Providing a regulatory environment that will facilitate the development of a broadcasting industry in Australia that is efficient, competitive and responsive to audience needs;
 - Promoting the role of broadcasting services in developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity;
 - Promoting the provision of high quality and innovative programming by providers of broadcasting services;
 - Encouraging providers of broadcasting services to respect community standards in the provision of program material;
 - Ensuring that providers of broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to program material which may be harmful to them;
4. the current Children's Television Standards were established substantively in 1990.

Primary Issues

The Children's Television Standards relate specifically to the provision of children's programs and appropriate safeguards during designated children's viewing times on free-to-air commercial television.

The review will look at whether the current Children's Television Standards are meeting their objective of promoting quality children's free-to-air programs on commercial television.

It will include a review of the processes required under the Children's Television Standards, their operational effectiveness and any inflexibilities.

ACMA recognises that the Government's media reform agenda and continuing technological developments will impact on the broad range of content standards

currently in place. These issues, including the application of content standards across media platforms, will need to be looked at comprehensively over the coming years, but the broader implications of these are beyond the scope of this review.

Similarly, broader government mechanisms to support the development and funding of children's television programs are not within the scope of the current review.

Terms of Reference

- The review will consider and make recommendations on the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the current Children's Television Standards, including the extent to which they achieve their current objectives.
- In particular, the review will consider whether current quota levels, time bands and scheduling for 'C' and 'P' programs, including Australian drama quotas, remain effective and appropriate in the context of contemporary media habits of children.
- The review will consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of current limitations on the amount, timing and content of non-program material, including advertising.
- The review will also consider the efficiency of current processes relating to the Standards, including, but not limited to, processes for content and quality assessments.
- The review will also retain the flexibility to consider other relevant matters that may arise through the review process.

Process

The review will be evidence-based, incorporating a strong research component and consideration of written submissions.

ACMA will be releasing an Issues Paper in the 1st half of 2007 and submissions to the review will be invited at this time.